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Lieutenant Governor Takes Historical Preservation Tour of Virginia City

(VIRGINIA CITY) -- Today Lt. Governor John Bohlinger, Chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Historic and Cultural Properties, took a tour of Virginia City to survey the potential impacts of Governor's Schweitzer's \$3 million proposed investment in Montana's Territorial Capital.

The State of Montana purchased Virginia City in 1997, but has not yet made a significant investment in the historic site. Virginia City is cared for by the Montana Heritage Commission, through the Department of Commerce.

The Schweitzer Administration is stepping up to the plate, by providing funds to help restore the town to its original grandeur. Governor Schweitzer's budget for 2008-2009 includes an appropriation of \$3 million to the Montana Department of Commerce for critical repairs to a dozen or more historic properties.

"Montana has a rich and often colorful history. Without this investment many of these building may not be here for our children and grandchildren to enjoy," said Bohlinger. "Governor Schweitzer and I believe in protecting our heritage for future generations and this is what our budget does."

Commerce Director Anthony Preite stated that the proposed \$3 million capital investment also makes sound financial sense. "In 1997, the Montana Legislature spent nearly \$6.3 million dollars to acquire these assets. Today these assets are estimated to worth at least \$30 million," said Preite. "Governor Schweitzer believes we need to protect this valuable asset and we believe the 2007 Legislature will agree."

Virginia City is the fifth most visited tourist attraction in Montana, and it is one of the only "living history" sites in the state. Each year volunteers from Montana and across the country, come to Virginia City to walk in the shoes of original residents. Visitors experience first hand how Montanans lived 100 years ago.

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